

Message Text

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43

ACTION AGR-20

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ADP-00 AID-20 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11

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FM AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI

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UNCLAS THESSALONIKI 0515

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, GR

SUBJECT: AGRICULTURAL SHORTAGES: SUGAR BEETS

1. "MAKEDONIA" OF AUGUST 23 REPORTS THAT SUGAR REFINERIES AT LARISSA AND PLATY ARE THREATENED WITH CLOSURE BECAUSE OF FARMERS' REFUSAL TO DELIVER SUGAR BEET HARVEST AT CURRENT PRICES. OF TWO PLANTS COMBINED DAILY REQUIREMENT FOR 6,000 TONS SUGAR BEETS, ONLY 1,000 TONS DELIVERED AUGUST 21. MEMBERS OF HELLENIC SUGAR BOARD NOW MEETING TO DECIDE ON FARMERS' REQUEST FOR PRICE INCREASE. NOTE: WHILE GOVERNMENT CURRENTLY ENCOURAGING LOCAL BEET PRODUCTION BY HIGHER GROWER SUBSIDY THAN THAT OFFERED FOR COTTON, FARMERS DEMAND NEW PRICE OF 800 DR. PER TON FOR SUGAR BEETS (APPROX 30 PER CENT INCREASE) TO MATCH RECENT INCREASE IN RETAIL SUGAR PRICE.

2. COMMENT: AGRICULTURAL PRICES HAVE BEEN SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM BY FARMERS HERE AND IN SEVERAL EDITORIALS BY CHIEF EDITOR ELIAS KYROU OF CONSERVATIVE "ELLINIKOS VORRAS". IN LEAD EDITORIAL OF AUGUST 23, HE TAKES GOVERNMENT STRONGLY TO TASK FAILING TO ADJUST AGRICULTURAL PRICES TO COST OF LIVING AND THUS CAUSING

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SHORTAGES OF WHEAT, SUGAR, POULTRY, MEAT AND

OTHER PRODUCTS. KYROU ALSO SUPPORTS PROCEDURES DEMANDS
FOR HIGHER SUGAR BEET PRICES.

3. SUGAR BEET SHORTAGE IS EVIDENTLY BECOMING CHRONIC:
LAST YEAR PLATY PLANT CLOSED PREMATURELY FOR WANT OF
BEETS. WITH NEW PROCESSING PLANT AT XANTHIHCOMING ON
STREAM THIS YEAR, BIDS ON FIFTH PLANT AT ORESTIAS ABOUT TO BE
AWARDED, GOVERNMENT MUST EITHER BEND STRENUOUS EFFORTS TO INCREASE
BEET PRODUCTION OR, APPARENTLY, FACE MORE PLANT CLOSURES.
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